

## Valentine's Day —Beyond the Hearts and Flowers

"I thought our first Valentine's Day as a married couple would be so special," sighed Shelley to her best friend Kate. "But instead, it's like he already just takes me for granted."

"What happened? Did he forget?" asked Kate.

"No, he brought me flowers and a card and then we just had an ordinary night. I was thinking a nice dinner, maybe theatre tickets, something really romantic. Since he didn't say anything, I thought it was going to be a surprise—but not this kind of surprise!"

Valentine's Day is the perfect time for a romantic date, flowers, and "just us" time. And as Shelley found out, it's also the perfect time to learn some essential marriage wisdom.

We get married because we think we've finally found the person who will make us feel special, loved, and appreciated in a way that no one else has. If this doesn't happen the way we imagined, we can feel horribly disappointed and feel as if our partner doesn't care the way we thought he or she did.

Here is where most of us make our mistake.

What it really means is that we haven't learned enough about each other yet. Here is the truth about making each other feel special.

- 1. The gestures that make us feel special are different for each one of us.**  
Did your family make a big deal out of birthdays? Did they plan parties in advance, build up the excitement, and spend a lot of money? Chances are that this style of celebration means love to you and you will expect the same from your partner. If his family took a low-key approach, he probably will as well. This doesn't mean he doesn't love you or that he "takes you for granted," as Shelley thought.
- 2. A wedding ring does not turn anyone into a mind reader—the only way our partner knows what makes us feel special is if we speak up.**  
I don't know where we got the idea that if he loves us, he will know what we want. The truth is, sometimes he will be tuned into our needs and sometimes he won't. AND THE SAME IS TRUE FOR EVERYONE. It has nothing to do with whether the two love each other; it has to do with being human.
- 3. Before we can speak up, we have to figure it out for ourselves. Sometimes even WE don't know what we really want.**  
Have you ever had a bad day at work and didn't know how to make yourself feel better? We all have. Most of us don't automatically know what makes us feel nurtured—we learn through a process of self-discovery. And until we do, we can't communicate it to someone else.

**4. Learning how to make each other feel special takes time.**

Taking this journey of self-discovery together is one of the joys of marriage. Think of your marriage as a movie, not a snapshot. It is always unfolding, and becoming and it will be better next year than it is this year. What Shelley needs to do is just open a conversation with her husband. She needs to find out how he feels about holidays and let him know how she feels. She needs to let him know that a special date on Valentine's Day is important to her. She needs to start with the idea that there is no right or wrong way to celebrate special occasions—there simply are different perspectives.

The key to a happy marriage is not a picture-perfect Valentine's Day. It is a commitment to learn. It is an attitude of curiosity, discovery, and delight in each other. Learn this essential marriage wisdom, and you will make each other feel special on Valentine's Day and every day.

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